

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJECT: POTENTIAL EFFECTS OF SENATE ELECTIONS ON DEMIREL
GOVERNMENT'S STABILITY

1. WE BELIEVE TURKEY'S OCTOBER 12 ELECTIONS FOR 54 OF 150
ELECTIVE SENATE SEATS COULD HAVE AN IMPORTANT IMPACT ON THE
STRENGTH AND STABILITY OF THE WEAK GOVERNING COALITION. THE
FOLLOWING ARE THE PRINCIPAL WAYS IN WHICH ALTERNATIVE ELECTION
OUTCOMES WOULD BE LIKELY TO AFFECT THE GOVERNMENT:

A. A STRONG SHOWING BY PRIME MINISTER DEMIREL'S JUSTICE PARTY (JP)
WOULD STRENGTHEN THE JP'S POPULAR MANDATE AND PROBABLY WOULD
ENABLE DEMIREL TO EXERCISE STRONGER LEADERSHIP OF THE COALITION.

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WHILE DEMIREL ALSO MIGHT BE ENCOURAGED TO SEEK EARLY GENERAL
ELECTIONS, HE PROBABLY COULD NOT FIND THE NECESSARY PARLIAMENTARY

SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP) OR THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) TO CALL ELECTIONS THAT THE JP MIGHT WIN.

B. A POOR SHOWING BY THE JP WOULD TEND TO BE READ GENERALLY AS A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN PRIMIN DEMIREL AND COULD BE FOLLOWED BY EITHER THE GOVERNMENT'S RESIGNATION OR ITS CONTINUATION ON AN EVEN WEAKER BASIS THAN AT PRESENT. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BOTH BY FONMIN CAGLAYANGIL IN JULY (ANKARA 5181) AND MORE RECENTLY BY JP DEPUTY SEC GEN YILDIRIM THAT A BIG LOSS (WHICH THEY DID NOT QUANTIFY IN EITHER SEATS OR VOTES) BY THE JP WOULD RESULT IN THE RESIGNATION OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, ANKARA JOURNALISTS WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED DOUBT THAT THE JP WOULD EASILY GIVE UP POWER, ESPECIALLY GIVEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT EARLY ELECTIONS WOULD FOLLOW IN UNFAVORABLE CIRCUMSTANCES (I.E., SOON AFTER A DEFEAT AND WITH ANOTHER GOVERNMENT IN POWER). ON THE OTHER HAND, A SEVERE SETBACK AT THE POLLS WOULD BOTH WEAKEN DEMIREL'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS HIS COALITION PARTNERS AND LEAVE HIM OPEN TO OPPOSITION CHARGES THAT HE WAS GOVERNING IN DEFIANCE OF THE MAJORITY'S WILL. WHILE HE COULD CONTINUE SO LONG AS THE COALITION RETAINED A LOWER HOUSE MAJORITY, HIS EFFECTIVENESS WOULD BE FURTHER REDUCED.

C. A VARIANT OF THESE OUTCOMES COULD RESULT FROM A STRONG CHANGE UP OR DOWN IN THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NSP. A SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT (WHICH THE NSP BELIEVES WOULD BE AT THE JP'S EXPENSE) OVER THE TEN PERCENT VOTE IT WON IN ITS FIRST ELECTION TRY IN 1973 NO DOUBT WOULD ENCOURAGE THE NSP TO ASSERT AN EVEN MORE INDEPENDENT ROLE WITHIN THE COALITION AND THUS MAKE THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUATION MORE DIFFICULT. ALSO, A STRENGTHENED NSP SHOWING, IF THE RPP ALSO GAINED, COULD GIVE BOTH THOSE PARTIES REASON TO WORK TOGETHER FOR EARLY ELECTIONS. ALTERNATIVELY, IF THE NSP DECLINES OR SIMPLY HOLDS ITS OWN, IT PROBABLY WOULD BE MORE WILLING TO COOPERATE WITHIN THE PRESENT COALITION.

D. IF THE ELECTIONS PRODUCE NO MARKED CHANGE FROM THE PARTIES' CURRENT STANDINGS, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE, AS WILL ITS INTERNAL STRAINS AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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OPPOSITION PRESSURE.

E. IF THE GOVERNMENT RESIGNED SHORTLY AFTER THE ELECTIONS, THE ENSUING GOVERNMENT CRISIS MIGHT WELL BE LENGTHY. THE MAIN POSSIBILITIES FOR THE COUNTRY PROBABLY WOULD BE: (1) AN ATTEMPT TO FORM NEW COALITIONS AS IN THE GOVERNMENT CRISES OF THE PREVIOUS TWO YEARS; (2) NEW GENERAL ELECTIONS; OR (3) SOME FORM OF MILITARY INTERVENTION (WHICH, THOUGH CURRENTLY UNLIKELY, CAN NOT RPT NOT BE RULED OUT IF THE POLITICAL SITUATION DETERIORATES BADLY.)

2. WHILE THERE IS AS YET NO RPT NO BASIS FOR PREDICTING THE OUT-
COME OF THE VOTE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NUMERICAL ODDS MAKE A
STRONG JP SHOWING VERY DIFFICULT. ALTHOUGH THE ELECTION IS FOR
ONE-THIRD OF THE SENATE, THE JP HAS MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF ITS
MAJORITY OF SENATE ELECTIVE SEATS (31 OF 34) IN THE CONTEST, WHILE
THE RPP HAS MUCH LESS THAN ONE-THIRD (8 OF 43) OF ITS SEATS UP
FOR REELECTION. ALSO, THE PREVIOUS ELECTION FOR THE SEATS AT
ISSUE THIS TIME WAS IN 1966, AND THE JP'S PERFORMANCE DECLINED
IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS HELD SINCE THEN. BY CONTRAST, THE RPP
COULD WIN 25 SEATS THIS OCTOBER MERELY BY REPEATING ITS 1973
VOTING PERCENTAGES IN THE PROVINCES INVOLVED. THUS IT IS ALMOST
INEVITABLE THAT THE RPP WILL GAIN SEATS AND THE JP WILL LOSE SEATS.
WHILE THE RPP WILL UNDOUBTEDLY SEEK TO MAKE THE MOST OF ITS
GAINS IN SEATS, OBJECTIVE OBSERVERS WILL COMPARE THE PERFORMANCE OF
THE TWO PARTIES ON THE BASIS OF CHANGES IN THE PERCENTAGE OF VOTES,
IN RELATION TO THE 1973 GENERAL ELECTIONS.
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